

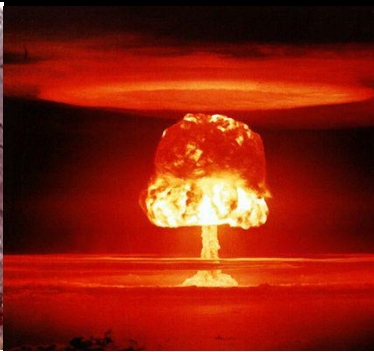
# The Cold War

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Minuteman Missile  
National Historic Site  
South Dakota



The Berlin Wall: Symbol of a Divided Europe



American Nuclear Test, 1954



Mutually Assured Destruction Under a Peaceful Prairie

## What was the Cold War?

The Cold War began just after the end of World War II. Conflict arose between the United States and Soviet Union - the remaining superpowers - because of their different economic and political systems. The Soviet Union was based on communism, the U.S. promoted democratic capitalism. Neither side ever fought the other directly in a hot or “shooting war,” due to the looming threat of a nuclear war. Instead, each side tried to gain an advantage in a variety of ways. These included an intense political competition, economic rivalries, propaganda, and a massive arms buildup that dominated foreign policy and international affairs. The two distinct ideologies divided the world. In 1946 British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the division line in Europe the “Iron Curtain”, with capitalism to the west and communism to the east.

## The Arms Race

The buildup of nuclear weapons was one way the Cold War was fought. Between the opposing sides, over 80,000 nuclear weapons were constructed. While none of these were detonated in a hot war, over 1,800 tests were conducted. The arms race nearly led to World War III several times, one of which was the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. At one point, the world’s nuclear stockpiles totaled a chilling 18,000 megatons. By comparison, the entire explosive force of all the bombs used during World War II was 2 megatons. Reflecting on the impact these weapons could have on the world, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara once said, “nuclear weapons have no military utility whatsoever, except to deter an enemy attack.”



SS-18 Satan Warhead



Minuteman II Warhead

# Cold War Timeline

Minuteman Missile National Historic Site  
Located 70 miles east of Rapid City,  
South Dakota off I-90 Exit 131  
605-433-5552, [www.nps.gov/mimi](http://www.nps.gov/mimi)  
[mimi\\_information@nps.gov](mailto:mimi_information@nps.gov)

**1945** - Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan to end World War II

**1946** - Churchill gives Iron Curtain Speech

**1949** - Soviet Union explodes atomic bomb

**1952** - United States explodes hydrogen bomb

**1953** - Soviet Union explodes hydrogen bomb

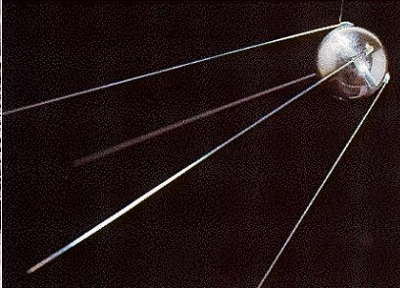
**1956** - Khrushchev tells U.S. *"We will bury you."*

**1957** - World's first satellite, Sputnik, launched by Soviet Union

**1959** - Nikita Khrushchev visits USA



Destruction at Hiroshima



Sputnik satellite



Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev



Watching a missile test launch

**1961** - Soviet Union places first man in space, Yuri Gagarin

**1961** - Berlin Wall built

**1962** - Cuban Missile Crisis

**1962** - First Minuteman Missiles become active on October 27<sup>th</sup> in Montana

**1969** - U.S. lands on moon

**1972** - SALT I agreement signed - first treaty limiting nuclear arms

**1972** - U.S. President Richard Nixon visits Moscow

**1973** - Yom Kippur War, U.S. forces go on worldwide alert

**1975** - Soviet hydrogen bomb creator Andrei Sakharov gets Nobel Peace Prize

**1983** - U.S. President Reagan proposes Star Wars

**1986** - Chernobyl nuclear power plant meltdown disaster

**1987** - Reagan gives "Tear Down that Wall" speech in Berlin

**1989** - Berlin Wall comes down

**1990** - Germany reunifies

**1991** - START Treaty signed by U.S. President George H.W. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev

**1992** - Declaration ending the Cold War signed by the Soviet Union and the U.S.

**1999** - Minuteman Missile National Historic Site designated



Signing of START Treaty in 1991

Minuteman Missile National Historic site is the only unit of the National Park Service designated to tell the story of the Cold War. Minuteman Missile NHS commemorates the role of the Minuteman Missile System in preventing nuclear war and preserving peace for over 30 years, and the men and women who made it possible.

Minuteman Missile NHS facilities are open 7 days a week, year 'round. Guided tour tickets and the virtual tour video are available at the Visitor Center, located at I-90 Exit 131. Visitors may tour Launch Facility Delta-09, located at I-90 Exit 116, to view the Minuteman II training missile on display inside this once operational missile silo, 8am to 4pm daily.



